

MINUTES OF ANNUAL TOWN BUDGET MEETING
TOWN OF ELLINGTON
May 10, 2005

Electors and citizens qualified to vote in Town Meetings were hereby notified that the Annual Town Budget Meeting of the Town of Ellington would be held on Tuesday, May 10, 2005 at 8:00 p.m. prevailing time at the Ellington High School, 37 Maple Street, for the following purposes:

First Selectman Dennis C. Milanovich called the meeting to order at 8:07 p.m., and then asked for nominations for a Moderator. **Mark Joyse** nominated **Mary Cardin** moderator, seconded by Dennis Frawley, vote by acclamation was unanimous, motion so carried

The Moderator then read the warning for the meeting, which was published in the Journal Inquirer on May 4, 2005 and is recorded in these records preceding these minutes.

1. To consider, and if deemed advisable, to adopt, pursuant to CGS Sec. 13a-99, a plan for repair of town roads and bridges for a period not exceeding five (5) years as recommended by the Board of Selectmen.

A. Leo Miller, Jr. made the motion to approve item 1 as warned, seconded by **Dennis Frawley**, vote by acclamation was unanimous, motion so carried

Ernest Boothroyd questioned when repairs to the bridge on Windermere Ave. which used to be called the Prichard Bridge were scheduled. First Selectman Dennis Milanovich stated it was scheduled for repairs in the year 2006.

2. To accept, as recommended by the Boards of Selectmen and Finance, prepaid grants and funds fully reimbursable for the Fiscal Year commencing on July 1, 2005 and ending on June 30, 2006, and to appropriate the same to the Board of Education in a sum not to exceed \$657,000, the allocation for which is on file in the Town Clerk's office.

A. Leo Miller, Jr. made the motion to approve item 2 as warned, seconded by **Mark Joyse** vote by acclamation was unanimous, motion so carried

Honora Willis questioned these funds and whether or not this would reduce the Board of Education budget. Robert Pagani, Chairman of the Bd. Of Finance explained this item had nothing to do with cuts to the Bd. Of Education's overall budget. Mr. Pagani further stated this was money from the State and the town must vote to accept and expend. Robert Clements a BOF member explained this was basically a formality in which the state says we will give you this money, and then we agree to spend it on Bd. of Education expenses.

3. To determine whether municipal tax shall be paid in two (2) installments for real estate, personal property and motor vehicle tax in excess of six hundred dollars (\$600) with designated due dates as stated in the Connecticut State Statutes Sections 12-142, 12-144, 12-144a and Public Act 77-343, Section 2, and to waive any property tax due in an amount less than five dollars (\$5) as stated in the Connecticut State Statutes Section 12-144c.

A. Leo Miller, Jr. made the motion to approve item 3 as warned, seconded by **Dennis Frawley**, vote by acclamation was unanimous, motion so carried

Ernest Boothroyd questioned the cost to the town to collect \$5.00. Tax Collector Pamela Lombardo stated the cost to process and mail these bills was approximately \$3.00, and now with the new computer systems bills can be linked which will reduce mailings and reduce some of the costs in the future.

4. To adjourn the Town Meeting to a referendum to be set no earlier than May 17, 2005, and no later than May 24, 2005, to be held from 6:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., pursuant to the motion for such referendum passed by the Board of Selectmen on May 2, 2005, with one question as follows:

SHALL THE TOWN OF ELLINGTON APPROPRIATE, UPON THE RECOMMENDATION OF AND AS ALLOCATED BY THE BOARD OF FINANCE, THE TOTAL SUM FOR ALL EXPENDITURES, A/K/A BUDGET GRAND TOTAL, FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2005-2006 THE SUM OF \$38,323,391?

A. Leo Miller, Jr. made the motion to adjourn the town meeting to a referendum with one question

"SHALL THE TOWN OF ELLINGTON APPROPRIATE, UPON THE RECOMMENDATION OF AND AS ALLOCATED BY THE BOARD OF FINANCE, THE TOTAL SUM FOR ALL EXPENDITURES, A/K/A BUDGET GRAND TOTAL, FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2005-2006 THE SUM OF \$38,323,391?" seconded by **Dennis Frawley**,

Dennis Milanovich made the motion to amend said motion that the Referendum be held at Ellington High School on Wednesday May 18th between hours of 6:00a.m. - 8:00p.m. seconded by **Robert Thiesing**,

At this time resident Kevin Krieger stated in part "every year we go through this proposed vote on this and every year it gets turned down one-twice-three times, why waste the money? Mr. Krieger felt this was too large an increase.

The Moderator called for the vote on the motion Mr. Milanovich just made before discussion would continue, **vote by acclamation was unanimous, motion so carried**

Robert Pagani, chairman of the Board of Finance then addressed to those in attendance,

"We are just completing a very difficult budget year and about to start another. The proposal we present to you this year is the best estimate of what we, with the input of all major boards, feel is necessary to maintain the high level of services that you have come to expect and enjoy. The increases occur in five major categories:

1st: Population and infrastructure growth cause new houses, roads and related items to spring up as the farm crops once did. However, corn and potatoes and hay do not have to be bussed and educated nor do they have to be plowed and sanded, patched and cleaned. All of this costs more every year. Below we will discuss some answers to this un-ending problem.

2nd: We are still besieged by State and Federal mandates that always seem to lack sufficient funding if they have any at all. "No child left behind" is hand-in-hand with "No retention pond left unmowed" and "No well left un-drilled". Today, the surest way to recognize someone from Hartford or Washington is to notice his mouth; it is three times the size of his wallet. The former is seldom closed and the latter is never open. Even our educational re-imbursement, set originally at 50% is down to 35% while our costs have doubled. If only the state would pay what is promised, our taxes would not increase at all this year.

3rd: Our obligations to repay monies borrowed for schools and other buildings, as well as a fire truck and land for future use has increased to \$3,191,111. This debt must and will be repaid, on time. I might add that these funds were borrowed at very low rates of interest, due in part to market conditions and Ellington's solid credit rating. We have a good fiscal reputation and your Board of Finance intends to keep it that way.

4th: As do all towns around us, we must pay more for our employees' wages and benefits. Contracts negotiated by the Board of Education called for salary increases of \$1,251,541 and benefits go up by \$344,275 before Board of Finance cuts were made. Other Town salaries and benefits are also rising and fuel, heating oil and related services are up across the board. Multiply these increases by the rising population figures and you can see our dilemma.

5th: For many years we have, in an attempt to hold taxes to acceptable levels, cut equipment and maintenance spending below department recommendations. Just last week we had a 60 year old culvert collapse under one of our roads. To keep the road open and avoid liability we must and will replace it. There are too many potential failures out there for us to keep postponing repairs. Our "finger in the dike" policy is no longer adequate.

The above are not the only influences on the budget although they are the most noticeable.

There are some things that we can do to relieve the pressure. The Board of Finance is requesting again that Development and Zoning fees be raised substantially so Ellington taxpayers no longer subsidize builders and land speculators. If people wish to move to Ellington, and the number of new dwellings indicates that many do, they must pay for the privilege. Long time residents should not be "handed the tab" for newcomers who strain our ability provide schools, parks and programs.

The Board of Selectmen and all Land-Use Boards must have updated fees in place by July 1st. The previous Board of Finance Chairman made this request a year ago. The problem will not solve itself.

We have included this year \$80,000 to update the Plan of Development first and the Zoning Regulations later, in an attempt to manage our growth. Make no mistake, Ellington will continue to change but that growth should be directed and controlled by the citizens of our town, not by "profit at any cost" developers who always manage to take the profit and leave the costs of unrestrained sprawl to us. We will also be spending \$60,000 to complete our GIS system, enabling us to keep more accurate building records.

The Board of Finance further proposes that an open space program be created to secure open space parcels and farm land development rights in a continuing effort to preserve the character of Ellington as well as the quality of life for all of us. We recommend that the Board of Selectmen do this by ordinance and that funding be put to a referendum in November of 2005. All of these measures will require spending money now to plan and protect Ellington's future but they are not just expenses, they are important investments, too long postponed, which will pay dividends for years to come. The first steps on the road to success cannot be taken until we remove our heads from the sand.

The Board of Finance is also asking the WPCA to halt, immediately, the further transfer of precious sewer capacity from commercial and industrial reserves to single and multi-family homes of all kinds. This includes so-called "Age-Restricted" housing which comes with multiple bedrooms and no guarantee to remain restricted. Building single family homes with many bedrooms is not economic development; it is economic suicide for this Town.

The time has come to recognize the contributions of the Greatest Generation and to extend a helping hand to our seniors. We ask the Board of Selectmen to enact a plan whereby seniors, on limited income only, can be insulated from further tax increases. Participants would receive an additional elderly credit equal to the yearly increase to be paid back to the Town upon transfer of title. The Town should provide this on an interest-free basis. We believe this is fair to seniors and taxpayers alike.

Before I close, please let me inform you of the likely direction this budget will take if this proposal is defeated. On the Town side, Public Safety will not be compromised. Our roads and infrastructure will be maintained. Our debt will be paid. On the Education side, we will not condemn our children to a life of ignorance. What this means is that all of those amenities, the sports and recreation, the music and cultural arts, the parks and playgrounds, library and social services, all those things that combine to make Ellington just a little different and a lot better will suffer or disappear altogether. People will be laid off, class sizes will grow and choices will shrink.

If anyone thinks that he or she has been shortchanged by this budget, just wait for the next one, your lifeboat will only get more crowded. "

Discussion continued; when asked Mr. Pagani stated this proposed budget would be a 3.3 mill increase.

The vote for the **motion to adjourn was taken and motion so carried.**

The meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted



Cynthia J. Lacapruvia, Town Clerk

Received for record 05/11/05 @ 1:35 Pm Attest  Town Clerk